

The Holt County Sentinel.

47TH YEAR.

OREGON, MISSOURI, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 29, 1911.

NUMBER 34.

THE BEST IN THE LAND

Work Progressing Satisfactorily on Holt County's \$150,000 Drainage Canal

25,000 ACRES OF BOTTOM LAND WILL BE BROUGHT INTO HIGH STATE OF CULTIVATION

This Vast Area of Redeemed Land Can be Made to Produce 1,500,000 Bushels of Corn or 700,000 Bushels of Wheat

One of the most gigantic rainage projects in the history of our state has been on in Holt county for the past two years, and after battling heroically to attain every legal right under the law, the great ditching machinery and a large force of men have been at work for the past twelve months making a drainage canal some seven miles in length and a width of 100 feet, and 6 to 16 feet deep with immense levees, measuring ten feet in height.

It taps the Big Tarkio river above Corning some two miles, and near the Atchison county line. Its course is southwest and passes between Corning and Craig, emptying its mighty volume of water to the southwest of Craig, where old Marietta used to be. We term it a ditch or drainage canal, but it is more properly an artificial river bed for the waters of the Big Tarkio river.

Big Tark has done untold damage and injury to the entire bottom section from Corning to Bigelow, by its snake-like form causing overflows, which floods the section mentioned during heavy rainfalls.

It is a gigantic undertaking, but the losses caused by these floods, finally aroused those who have continually suffered, to do something, and hence the coming into existence of the Big Tarkio Drainage District. In addition to the main canal it will have 25 miles of laterals, and some 8 miles of levees, these with the old river bed it is fully believed will be ample to take care of any overflow water that may come, and thus no more serious damage from disastrous floods in the future. It will reclaim large bodies of land that have heretofore been next to useless on account of the frequent overflows, and make these lands far more valuable and productive.

The original movers looking to the organization of this drainage district encountered more bitter opposition from those whom the project was intended to benefit than did Columbus with the people in his day. In his attempt to convince them that the world was round. The two years of controversy and litigation to secure the most feasible right of way has afforded evidence of the fact that human nature is much the same the world over. Most every farmer was willing to admit that the drainage canal was a necessity, but some wanted to see it cut through the other fellow's land.

Obstacles both legal and personal had to be overcome, and every inch of legal grounds on the part of objectors had to be met and overcome. Damages had to be adjudicated in and out of court, and sometimes the commissioners would feel discouraged, but would be buoyed up by their counsel, and still fight on—even up to the present day, damages are being contended for. The dredge boat passed through the right of way four miles northwest of Craig on Sept. 18, 1911. A temporary loop track was built about 200 feet around the place for the use of the trains, until the dredger had cut the channel and the new steel bridge was put into place. The bridge was completed Wednesday, September 20, the loop track has been torn out and the dredger went on its way toward the old Missouri, about five miles farther.

One or two farmers who had sought to enjoin the railroad company from laying the temporary tracks through their premises, appeared on the scene Sunday, Sept. 17, with weapons and attempted to prevent the work, but the railroad men in charge of the con-

struction sent for the sheriff, who restored peaceful relations. What-ever damages that have been incurred will likely be adjusted in the courts. This is only one of the many troubles that have come to the commissioners and their attorney, W. H. Richards.

In the past six or eight years but two profitable crops have been raised on these 25,000 acres of land, and in the past five years hardly a crop, on much of it scarcely a carload of grain has been produced from that immense body of land. Year after year these farmers, with new-born courage, have broken the ground, planted the seed, witnessed the sprouting of the grain, smiled, anticipating rich harvests; and yearly the floods have smothered the tender sprouts and buried the farmers' hopes beneath an inland sea of water. Such land, in such condition, is worse than valueless. It wastes a man's time. The soil of the Missouri bottom is as rich as that of the valley of the Nile, and indestructible and without bottom. A few big corn crops will not only put these owners in excellent financial shape, but will enhance the value of the land much more than the cost per acre for putting the ditch

through.

If half of this 25,000 acres were in growing corn, it should yield 60 bushels per acre, or a total of 750,000 bushels annually, or 3,750,000 bushels in five years, worth at 40 cents per bushel, \$1,500,000. Presuming that the total of wheat, and other grains and garden stuff, horses, cattle, hogs, have an equal value to that of the corn, the district to be reclaimed, has lost in the past five years a total value of five million dollars, or \$900,000 per year. These estimates are surely conservative.

In the digging of the Big Tarkio drainage ditch a fact has developed which painfully argues the loss from erosion—water wash—in the adjoining hill country. The big steam shovel of the dredge-boat uncovered fence eight feet below the surface of the land. The posts, being under cover, have not rotted—even the wire is yet in being. Think what this implies. This section has not been inhabited by white people over eighty years.

Wire, for fencing purposes, is a concept of the last half century. Yet posts and fence wire were found eight feet beneath the surface. But this

suggests only half the fact. It happens that the drainage ditch is exactly on the line of the buried and forgotten fence. The big shovel uncovered and dug up nearly a half mile of the fence—all of it buried deeply. The fact also suggests the great volume of water which flows in from the hills, since the dirt which covered the fence could come from no other source.

The Beginning.

The initial steps taken to create Big Tarkio Drainage District, occurred at Craig on Saturday, July 7, 1909, when a number of representative landowners of overflowed lands in that section of the county near Bigelow, Craig and Corning met, and after some discussion, the conclusion was reached by those present that it was time something was done to redeem and make this large body of land safe from overflow. Frank K. Allen was chosen as president, who named the following committee to look into the matter of the consolidation of Tarkio Drainage Districts Nos. 1 and 2: Asa Sharp, A. D. Cunningham, W. J. Randall, Harmon Ohlenschlen, F. W. Walter, J. F. Bridgeman, Sam Kahn

and John Hall. At a meeting held on July 25th, this committee reported 13,000 acres had been pledged and decided to take up the question of organization and the following were appointed a committee to define the territory to be included in the petition: F. W. Walter, Jno. A. Buck, J. F. Bridgeman, W. J. Randall, Sam Kahn, W. H. Richards. Upon the signing of a petition by a majority of the land owners in the territory south of No. 2, their attorney, G. W. Murphy was authorized to confess a motion to dissolve incorporation of Big Tarkio Drainage District No. 2, which was done in due form and time.

At this July meeting a committee, consisting of Sam Kahn, Lot Brown, John Stadler, Thos. Pebley, W. J. Randall, Jno. A. Buck and G. W. Murphy, was named to take action looking to the employment of an attorney, and the preparation of the legal steps for the formation of the drainage district.

On October 6th, 1909, this committee met at Bigelow and selected W. H. Richards as attorney in chief, with G. W. Murphy as assistant. Mr. Murphy died, however, Nov. 2d,

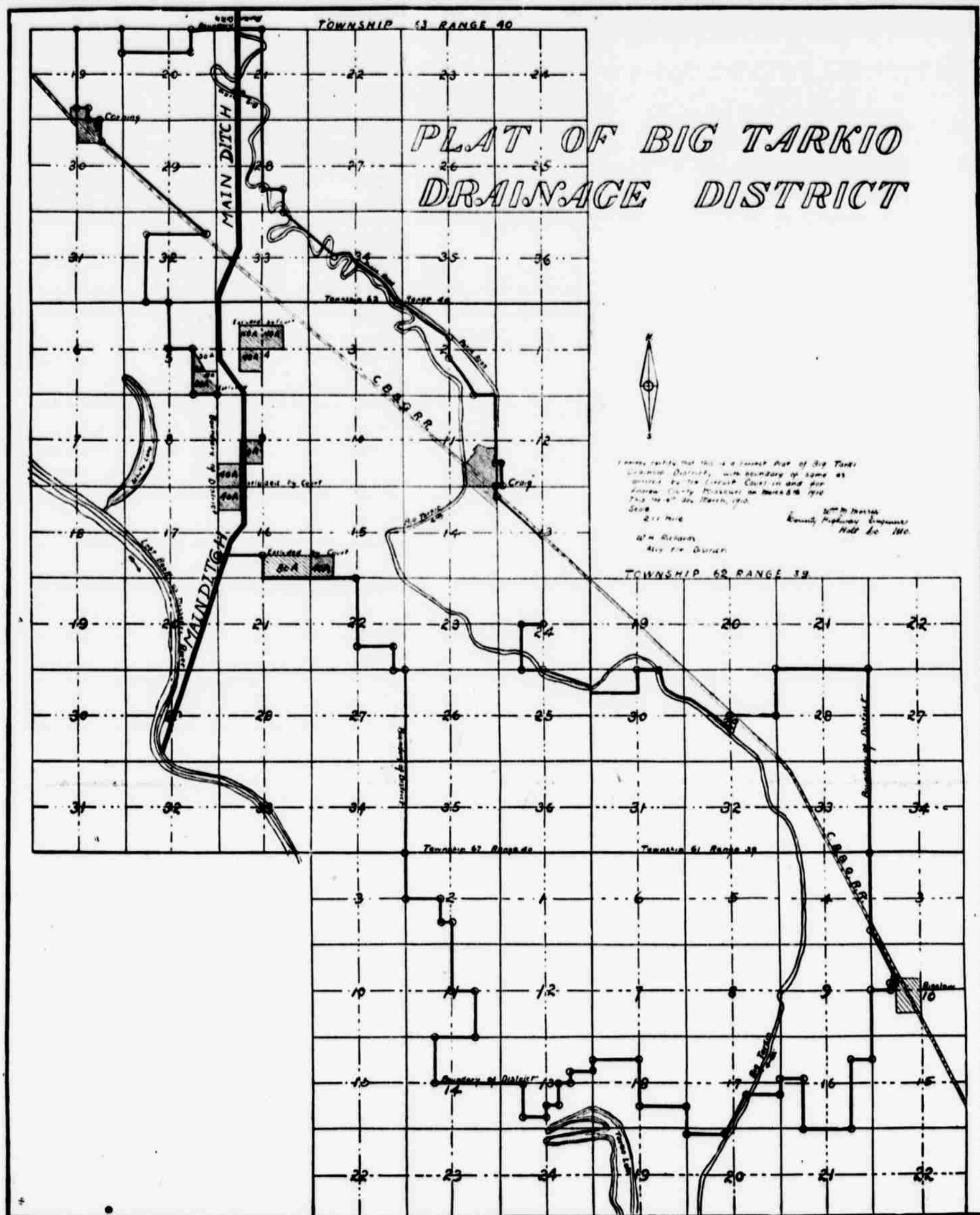
1909. On October 9th, 1909, at its meeting held at Bigelow, it was agreed that the name for the proposed drainage scheme should be: The Big Tarkio Drainage District.

On October 26, 1909, this committee again met at Bigelow and a proposition was submitted by H. B. Williams looking to the including of Little Tarkio Drainage District No. 1 in the proposed Big Tarkio Drainage District. This was declined for the reason that Big Tarkio had no jurisdiction.

Death again now enters the ranks of these promoters: on March 19th, 1910, Sam Kahn, chairman of this committee, died, and the committee met at Bigelow, March 24, 1910, and named J. F. Bridgeman as chairman, and passed becoming resolutions on the death of their co-worker.

The naming of the attorneys meant business, and the beginning of one of the most colossal legal jobs ever undertaken in our county and, without fuss or feather, Mr. Richards began the work, and November 18th, 1909, the petition was ready and was filed, asking for the incorporation of Big

(Continued on Page Four.)



The heavier black line marks the course of the Drainage Canal; the lighter, the boundaries of the District.